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CPYRGHT

A Medal For Powers

On August 17, 1960, Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot who was shot down while on a photo reconnaissance flight over Russia, stood in a Russian court and begged forgiveness for his "very grave crime." Before the world, he recanted and said he had done his country an "ill service" in his \$30,000-a-year job. He placed the blame on the U.S. Government which, he said, had "ordered" him to make the flight. He said he was "deeply repentant and profoundly sorry" that he had flown over Russian territory. He pleaded for mercy.

For this whimpering performance which the Reds used to portray Americans as abject cowards who will do anything for a dollar, Powers was given 10 years in prison.

Last week, the Central Intelligence Agency gave him a medal.

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Nobody was supposed to know about the medal, although it was bestowed in the name of the American people. Powers received it in a secret ceremony and is not supposed to wear it. It is one of those "under the lapel" things. All very hush-hush, in the "best tradition" of the CIA, which hired him to make the U-2 flights.

Strangely enough, neither the New York Herald Tribune, which broke the story, of the award of the medal, nor the Associated Press which rewrote it for its members, mentioned Powers' degrading performance during the trial almost five years ago. Not a word. And yet, on August 17, 18, 19 and 20 of 1960, it was the biggest story in

the world. At the time the AP quoted Powers as saying, "I realize I have committed a grave crime." The wire service noted that Powers made "repeated expressions of regret and repentance." It also noted that Soviet authorities had "made it clear" that their primary objective was to convict U.S. policy in the eyes of the world. By shifting the blame to his superiors in the U.S. Government, and indicting his own country, Powers helped them do just that.

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The original Tribune story on the medal pointed out that Powers had been subjected by the CIA to an "exhausting interrogation" upon his release by the Russians in exchange for a Soviet spy convicted in this country. The story noted that the CIA had released a statement—on the very day Powers was called to testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee following his release by the Russians—in which it said Powers had lived up to his "obligations as an American under the circumstances under which he found himself." The Senate committee also "cleared him."

So did the U.S. State Department, which, the day after Powers was sentenced by the Russians, said it saw nothing in his conduct to warrant prosecution and added that he would continue to receive his pay while in the Soviet prison.

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Why was Powers flying over Soviet territory?

After earlier lies, President Eisenhower answered that. He said the flights were ordered to protect the United States against the possibility of a surprise attack by the Soviet Union.

For this, Powers was "profoundly sorry." This, he said, was a "grave crime." For this, he begged mercy.

Contrast, if you will, the performance of Nathan Hale, whose only regret was that he had but one life to give for his country.

—Or contrast the performance of many American servicemen taken prisoners of war, who have resisted "brainwashing," starvation, and often gruesome physical and mental torture, and conducted themselves in the highest traditions of patriotism, human bravery and fortitude.

—Or contrast the behavior of Russian Col. Rudolph Abel, who was sentenced to 30 years in prison after being convicted in an American court of spying for Russia. Colonel Abel behaved as a soldier. He did not plead for mercy, he did not beg, recant, or whine. He did not even confess. The U.S. traded Colonel Abel to Russia for Powers. As usual, we got the short end of the deal.

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We can only conclude that an abject admission by an American that he has committed a wrong in fighting for the United States against the Soviet Reds and a groveling plea by him for mercy while standing in the world spotlight, NOW is considered by the U.S. Government to be living up to one's obligation as an American!